

FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF FARNHAM ROYAL PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON MONDAY 26 JUNE 2023 AT 7.30 P.M. AT FARNHAM ROYAL VILLAGE HALL, FARNHAM LANE, FARNHAM ROYAL, SL2 3AX

Present

Paul Rowley (Chair)	Marilyn Rolfe
Bob Milne	Jenny Quilter
Katherine Damsell	Judith Hall (Clerk)

Buckinghamshire Cllr. Dev Dhillon and five members of the public were in attendance.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 7.30pm. The meeting was adjourned for OPEN FORUM noted at the end of these minutes. The Chair reconvened the meeting.

23/61/PC Apologies for absence

David Moore and Tony Birkett

23/62/PC Declarations of Interest

Marilyn Rolfe declared an interest in respect of agenda item 9.1 (23/70.1/PC below) as she is one of the trustees of the proposed landlord.

23/63/PC To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2023

Bob Milne raised two points regarding the minutes.

1. He advised that the starting time of the meeting should be corrected to 6.30pm. It was agreed that this amendment would be made.
2. 23/56/PC – he advised that 56.1 should be amended to include that he had voted against the proposal. It was agreed that this amendment would be made.

The minutes as amended were then **approved** and **it was agreed** that they would be signed by the Chair. Bob Milne noted that some of the comments he had made were not recorded and expressed his opinion that comments should be recorded if councillors abstain or vote against a proposal to record their reasoning.

23/64/PC Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda - for information only)

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

64.1 Update on Community Speedwatch

The content of the report was noted.

64.2 Update on siding out footpath between Farnham Common Sports Club and the Playground

The content of the report was noted.

64.3 Update on demolition of the old Guide Hut

The content of the report was noted. Bob Milne added that as the site had been opened up by removing the boundary hedging and fencing it is necessary to ensure that the site is safe especially as children will be going on it. He had observed a few bits of metal and some hedge cuttings that needed removing.

64.4 Update on meeting with Buckinghamshire Highways (inc. verge cutting and dropped kerbs)

The content of the report was noted. Those present felt that whilst it was useful to have the list of issues discussed these should be prioritised paying attention to the concerns of residents. Based on the issues raised at the Annual Parish Meeting, speeding generally and outside the Farnham Common Infant School particularly and the condition and installation of dropped kerbs are important to residents.

64.5 Update on annual flagpole services

The content of the report was noted.

64.6 Update on replacement defibrillator battery at Farnham Common Sports Club

The content of the report was noted.

64.7 Update on Farnham Common Playground Project

The content of the report was noted. The Chairman added that Marilyn Rolfe was currently drafting documents required for the loan application and it was anticipated that this would be done by the end of the week. Katherine Damsell noted that interest rates have risen and having looked at the current rates and repayments it was likely that the term would need to be extended which may require another parish council resolution but it was prudent to wait until the application is ready before progressing this.

64.8 Update on application to Beeches Community Board for match funding for a new MVAS

The content of the report was noted.

64.9 Update on Farnham Pump Sign

The content of the report was noted.

64.10 Update on Annual Parish Meeting web page

The content of the report was noted.

64.11 Update on electricity Contract

The content of the report was noted. Bob Milne asked for clarification about what was stated in the report. He was advised that the Parish Council is approaching the end of the first year of a 24 month contract and given the falling electricity prices, Buckinghamshire Council had given the option to leave the contract at the end of the first year but because of the way they purchase the electricity a termination fee would be payable. Due to the timescale imposed by Buckinghamshire Council, the relevant form had been submitted to find out what the termination fee would be and once received the market could be compared and a decision could be made. Again, due to the timescale the decision would need to be taken over email and ratified at the July 2023 parish council meeting.

64.12 Update on 130 years of Farnham Royal Parish Council

The content of the report was noted. Most of those present felt it would be good to recognise this anniversary and agreed to think of some ways to mark it.

64.13 Update on parish councillor recruitment

The content of the report was noted. Katherine Damsell suggested adopting a similar approach to that of the Farnham Common Community Library in recruiting a new Chairperson. It was also suggested that new councillors should be recruited based on the skills they would bring to the parish council to compliment and add to those already present.

64.14 Update on actions taken in respect of the Rectification Notice received pursuant to Article 16 UK GDPR

The content of the report was noted.

64.15 Update of flowerbeds at Rectory Close, Farnham Royal

The content of the report was noted. Bob Mine added that he believed the annual budget had included a provision for maintaining these flowerbeds and expressed his frustration that Buckinghamshire Council manage to cut the grass regularly to maintain the green by Bishops Orchard in Farnham Royal but are unable to do the same on Kingsway Green and on the verge by these flowerbeds. He restated that Buckinghamshire Council should be maintaining all these areas.

23/65/PC Parish Council Appointments and Roles

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

65.1 General statement about appointments and enhanced protection

The content of the report was noted and the fact that all parish councillors are free to take up any roles within the parish council was confirmed. The addition of the paragraph suggested by the Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Association of Local Councils to the parish council website will be discussed again at a later date.

65.2 To consider the appointment of David Moore as Lead Councillor for Environment

The content of the report was noted and the appointment of David Moore **was agreed**.

65.3 To consider the creation of a role of Lead Councillor for Communication

The creation of Lead Councillor for Communication **was agreed** and the suggested scope contained within the report **was also agreed**. It was acknowledged that the parish council would need to recruit a new councillor to fill the role.

23/66/PC To consider holding 'Meet Your Local Councillors' Sessions

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

Holding 'Meet Your Local Councillors' sessions **was agreed**. It was also suggested that a rota of willing parish councillors should be prepared to ensure the Chairman was supported at the sessions.

23/67/PC To consider attending Orchard Day 2023 and the associated costs

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

Attendance at Orchard Day **was agreed** and a budget of £500 to produce printed materials and purchase other sundry items **was agreed**.

23/68/PC The Farnhams' Neighbourhood Plan

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

68.1 To consider various buildings and structures for designation as a Local Heritage Asset

Those present felt that preparing a list of Local Heritage Assets would help with preserving the character of the villages and therefore this should be a policy in the Neighbourhood Plan but there were questions about why some of the buildings had been included. It was agreed that councillors would review the list and provide their comments before the next meeting of the Steering Group on 12 July 2023. The Clerk was asked to provide the criteria for inclusion on the list.

68.2 To consider methods and a budget for promoting the Formal Consultation

Those present felt that in an effort to maximise the participation of residents, there should be exhibitions in the village halls and if possible, the library, empty shops and any other suitable locations. It was also felt that representation at Orchard Day was important. A budget of £1,000 to produce printed materials (that clearly state what the plan does and does not do) and to purchase other sundry items **was agreed**. Those present felt that offering the chance to win a prize for submitting a response to the consultation was not appropriate.

Following a discussion regarding the timeline for completing this stage of the Neighbourhood Plan, it **was agreed** that the clerk should ask Leani Haim of Oneill Homer, to present the final pre consultation draft of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Parish Council when councillors consider whether to approve it or not. It was noted that there would be a cost for her to attend and a budget of £500 **was agreed**.

23/69/PC To consider the naming of the access road leading to Cedar House, Oaktree House and Laurel House off Collinswood Road, Farnham Common

The Chairman advised that prior to the meeting all councillors had been provided with a report detailing the items under this section. The report can be downloaded from the Parish Council website.

It **was agreed** that the Parish Council would not object to 'Claybourne Drive' as chosen by the residents.

23/70/PC Contracts:

70.1 To consider the lease for the new office

The chairman confirmed that the terms of the lease had been agreed by the parties and the solicitors were recommending its completion. The lease **was agreed** and the Chairman and Katherine Damsell **were authorised** to sign the lease on behalf of the Parish Council.

70.2 To award the contract for Woodland & Grassland Maintenance from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2027

Bob Milne, as Lead Councillor for Woodland & Open Spaces, advised that two contractors had submitted a tender based on the scope contained in the invitation issued by the Parish Council. As both tenders included the same work it **was agreed** to appoint Amersham Town Council as their price, £4,725 plus VAT, was significantly less than the other contractor.

23/71/PC Finance:

71.1 To consider amendments to the Finance Committee's Terms of Reference

The Clerk advised that as the Contracts Working Group had been disbanded at the last meeting it had been suggested that its responsibilities should be transferred to the Finance Committee. As a result, it was necessary to update the Committee's Terms of Reference. The amended terms of Reference **were agreed**.

Katherine Damsell, as Lead Councillor for Finance and Contracts, advised that she had started to prepare a simple pro-forma to assist councillors with performance management.

71.2 To consider 2023 Christmas lighting quote

The Clerk advised that the quote was based on the same display as 2022. The cost of £7,857.50 **was agreed**.

71.3 To receive and note the 2022/23 Annual Internal Audit report

The 2022/23 Annual Internal Audit report was received and noted. Katherine Damsell, as Lead Councillor for Finance and Contracts, advised that the report had been provided in draft format on Friday and was due to be signed off following a partner review on Tuesday 27 June 2023. She continued that the report had identified four areas that the Auditor feels could be improved.

71.3.1 Bank Payment Authorisation – during 2022/23 due to the reclassification of some Full Council meetings to Working Group meetings to improve attendance, some of the monthly cashbooks, which

can only be approved at Full Council meetings, were approved after the payments had been made. This weakness was identified during the year by the Clerk and therefore the number of Full Council meetings for 2023/24 was increased at the Annual Meeting held in May 2023. The Internal Auditor is happy this will address this issue.

71.3.2 Fixed Asset Register – it has been recommended that disposal dates are added to the register and this **was agreed**.

71.3.3 Income recognition – some of the income received in 2022/23 and therefore included in the 2022/23 accounts related to 2021/22 namely a payment from Buckinghamshire Council towards the cost of maintaining St Mary's Churchyard in 2021/22 and another payment from Buckinghamshire Council in respect of the Parish's entitlement under The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations ("CIL") up to 31 March 2023. Going forward, although this income is received during the year after the liability is created, the Auditor would like it to be included in the accounts for the year the liability arises. Whilst this is possible for the payment in respect of St Mary's Churchyard as the maintenance figure is known when the accounts are prepared, it is not possible in respect of the CIL payment as this is not known until a payment, if any, is received. This has been explained to the Auditor and the Clerk is waiting for a reply.

In addition, historically the accounts have netted off grant income against the expenditure to which it relates. The auditor has advised that going forward the income should not be netted off. This **was agreed** and it was noted that the 2022/23 accounts have been amended to correct this.

71.3.4 Publication requirements for 2021/22 AGAR – the required documents were published late following a delay in their approval as the parish council meeting to consider them was inquorate delaying their approval for one month. Hopefully this will not happen in the future.

71.4 To consider the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement (Section 1 AGAR)

The 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement **was agreed**.

71.5 To consider the 2022/23 Accounting Statements (Section 2 AGAR)

The 2022/23 Accounting Statements **were agreed**.

71.6 To note the arrangements for the exercise of public rights

The Clerk confirmed that the period for the exercise of public rights to inspect the accounting records for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 will commence on Wednesday 28 June 2023. The period continues for 30 working days and ends on Tuesday 8 August 2022.

71.7 To consider payments and note receipts, as per the June 2023 cashbook

The payments were **approved** and the receipts were noted.

23/72/PC Planning:

72.1 To ratify comments submitted on recent applications

Marilyn Rolfe, as Chair of the Planning Working Group, brought the following applications to the attention of those present:

- PL/23/0926/FA 1 Fairfield Lane, Farnham Royal for the Subdivision of plot, erection of a new dwelling with attached garage and formation of vehicular access. This application is causing distress to residents in Fairfield Lane. She confirmed that the Parish Council has submitted a comment objecting to the application and has requested that the application is 'called in' to the Planning Committee. She asked the Clerk to ensure the Ward Councillors are aware of the application.

The planning comments on the circulated schedule **were ratified**.

72.2 To note recent planning decisions

The planning decisions on the circulated schedule **were noted**.

23/73/PC Any Other Business (for information only)

73.1 Katherine Damsell noted that in Martin Tett's latest update he reported that Buckinghamshire Council are planting a tree for every resident which is ironic given the number of mature trees that are being removed from public land in The Farnhams.

73.2 The Chairman advised those present that David Banks had sadly passed away and expressed his thanks, on behalf of the Parish Council, for everything that he did for the community.

73.3 The Clerk advised that she had been contacted by a concerned parent whose daughter is too scared to walk to the bus stop by Home Meadow in Farnham Royal to catch the school bus due to the drunken and antisocial behaviour of some adults who linger around the convenience store and bus stop. The Clerk continued that she had reported the issue to Cllr. Dhillon and PCSO O'Connell asking for help to improve the position.

73.4 The Clerk advised that Cllr. Dhillon and PCSO O'Connell had requested that she apply to the TVP Community Fund to facilitate the purchase and installation of gates on the public right of way through a

field in Blackpond Lane. The field is currently the location of antisocial behaviour as youngsters are racing off road bikes around the field having accessed it from the footpath. The Clerk advised that she had contacted the Buckinghamshire Council Rights of Way Team as they are responsible for the footpath and the TVP Community Fund for further information.

73.5 Bob Milne, referring to the funds awarded to Burnham Beeches Rotary at the last parish council meeting to support Orchard Day, advised that in future should councillors be asked to consider a grant application it should be clearly labelled as such on the agenda and associated documents and the Grant Policy should be followed.

23/74/PC Next parish council meetings:

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Full Council on 24 July 2023 at 7.30pm at Farnham Common Village Hall

Full Council (Focus on Projects) on 25 September 2023 at 7.30pm at Farnham Royal Village Hall

Full Council (Focus on contracts) on 30 October 2023 at 7.30pm at Farnham Common Village Hall

OPEN FORUM

Cllr. Dhillon advised that the meeting with Buckinghamshire Highways had been very positive and he thanked the officers for attending and agreeing to attend regular meetings going forward.

Cllr. Dhillon advised that Buckinghamshire Council had launched a new £1.8m grant scheme for rural businesses which could provide grants ranging from £2,500 to £300,000. Parish Councillors were encouraged by this given that local businesses are struggling and there are a few empty units along The Broadway. It was suggested that Tony Birkett, Lead Councillor for Community, who is liaising with business owners might like to look at this with local businesses. Katherine Damsell advised that she would like to identify the freeholders along The Broadway as there is a rumour that the rent is too high and she would like to understand this more.

A resident of Farnham Royal advised that the Government is currently debating legislation that would enable a local authority to look at commercial properties that have been vacant for a year and force the landlord to let the unit to meet a need in the community for the rent they can get rather than the rent they would like.

A couple from Farnham Common raised the condition of the pavement between Elm Close and Forge Drive as one of them had suffered a nasty fall causing some bruising, cuts and abrasions. The couple had visited the Clerk earlier in the day and wanted to confirm that they had sent her the photographs promised and that they would be submitting a report on fixmystreet.buckinghamshire.gov.uk.